

Native Uses Of Wetlands And Natural Resources Planning: The Swinomish Indian Tribal Community's Wetlands Cultural Assessment

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The Swinomish Indian Tribal Community's Wetlands Cultural Assessment Project was initiated to develop an understanding of Swinomish cultural values of wetland systems. The Tribe found there was a need to determine Swinomish wetland cultural values because standard wetland inventory and functional assessment methods could not adequately identify wetland functions or uses related to Tribal cultural values. Significant cultural functions were not adequately captured in the assessment of the wetland systems so cultural assessment considerations were absent from the functional rating values and hence proposed regulatory and management policy would not adequately protect the wetlands in regards to Swinomish cultural values. This project has developed a cultural resource assessment module that can be incorporated into wetland assessments. Local Native knowledge has been gathered about the traditional uses of native wetland vegetation and wildlife to inform the module. With this traditional environmental knowledge incorporated into wetland assessments, we hope to reassess and revalue the wetlands on the Swinomish Reservation to better protect and preserve these wetlands for both cultural uses and ecological functionality.